

U.S. Court of Federal Claims



CM/ECF Update

December 2002

Case Management

CM / ECF

Electronic Case Files

Overview

In May of 2002, the U.S. Court of Federal Claims was selected by the Administrative Office of the U.S. Courts to convert to the CM/ECF system. CM stands for Case Management and ECF stands for Electronic Case Files. The CM portion of this system allows the court to manage its docket using a modern and easy to use system. ECF allows the court and attorneys to file documents in their cases via the internet.

What are the Advantages to CM/ECF?

The benefits of CM/ECF are numerous:

- Access to electronic docket sheets
- Immediate access to filed documents
- Access to documents from anywhere with internet access
- Access to electronic documents 24/7
- Simultaneous access of documents
- Automatic electronic noticing of filings
- Increased document searching capability
- Less physical storage space needed for paper copies
- Reduced mail and courier costs

Electronic Access

A key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it provides unprecedented access to up-to-the-second docket sheets as well as to the documents themselves over the Internet through the Court's electronic filing web site.

Electronic Filing

Another key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it accepts documents filed electronically

over the Internet. While it is not necessary that documents be filed electronically to have them entered into the CM/ECF system, electronic filing is strongly encouraged by the Court.

Electronic Noticing

A third key feature of the CM/ECF system is that it provides immediate e-mail notices to all counsel involved in a case whenever a document is filed. To receive electronic notice of filings, attorneys must be registered to file electronically and must have the e-mail noticing feature of their Court account turned on.

How will the court use CM/ECF?

On the "Go-Live" date, the court will require electronic filing in all new Contract cases where DOD is the defendant. Additionally, all existing Contract DOD cases for Chief Judge Damich, Judge Allegra, and Judge Block will be converted to electronic cases on the "Go-Live" date. The court is still discussing when and how to expand additional cases and case types for electronic filing.

Why use DOD cases?

Good ECF candidates include cases with no or few Pro Se's, no or few sealed documents, no or few privacy or confidentiality concerns, predictable paper/work flow, and large firms with sufficient technical resources for ECF.

When will CM/ECF be available?

The court is scheduled to go live on CM/ECF in March of 2003.

What has been Accomplished So Far?

The court has installed the CM/ECF hardware and software. Clerks Office staff have received initial training.

What are the Current Project Activities?

The court is customizing the system to meet the court's tracking and reporting requirements. Awareness activities for the bar are underway. Data in the current docketing system is being cleaned up for the migration. Rules and General Orders to allow electronic filing are being drafted.

Are There Fees?

Electronic access to court data by the public is available through the Public Access to Court Electronic Records (PACER) program. Attorneys and litigants receive one free copy of documents filed electronically in their cases; additional copies are available for viewing or downloading at seven cents per page. Directed by Congress to fund electronic access through user fees, the judiciary has set the fee at the lowest possible level sufficient to recoup program costs.

Attorney Registration

In order to file documents electronically and to receive e-mail notices of documents that are filed, attorneys must be admitted to practice before the Court and must be registered to file electronically. Upon registration, attorneys will be provided with an identification name and password that will allow access to the system. The identification name and password will also serve as the attorney's signature for all documents that are filed electronically. Attorney registration will begin in January of 2003.

How Will I Sign Documents?

The court will issue logins and passwords. Using your login and password to file a document is considered to be your signature.

Technical Requirements

Filers will need the following hardware and

software to file documents in the CM/ECF electronic filing system:

- A personal computer running a standard platform such as Windows or Macintosh.
- A PDF-compatible word processor like Macintosh or Windows-based versions of WordPerfect or Word.
- Internet service.
- Netscape Navigator version 4.6 or 4.7. (Netscape 6 is not recommended for use with CM/ECF.) The new versions of the CM/ECF system have been certified to be compatible with Internet Explorer 5.5.
- Software to convert documents from a word processor format to portable document format (PDF). Adobe Acrobat PDF Writer is recommended. Acrobat Writer Version 3.X, 4.X and 5.0 adequately meet the CM/ECF filing requirements.
- Adobe Acrobat Reader, which is available for free, is needed for viewing PDF documents.
- A scanner may be necessary to create electronic images of documents that are not in your word processing system.

What Kind of Training will be Provided?

Training of court personnel and attorneys is a significant component of the CM/ECF project. Training will be provided for the court and attorneys before the "go-live" date in March 2003. Look for future web-based training on the court website.

Where Can I Get More Information?

See the latest U.S. Court of Federal Claims CM/ECF information at:

<http://www.uscfc.uscourts.gov/cmecf.htm>.

Updates are made frequently. For more general information, see the U.S. Courts website at:

<http://www.uscourts.gov/cmecf/cmecf.html>.

Email questions can be sent to uscfc_cmecf@ao.uscourts.gov.